

MAILBOX NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

Not Applicable.

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STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not Applicable.

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REFERENCE TO A MICROFICHE APPENDIX

Not Applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

TECHNICAL FIELD

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This invention relates to a mailbox and, more particularly, to a dual access mailbox that includes a wireless mechanism for alerting residents when the mail has been delivered.

PRIOR ART

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In many parts of the United States, especially rural areas, mailboxes are remotely located with respect to the residence of the person to whom the mailbox belongs. Often this distance can be as much as several hundred yards or more, making it necessary to travel outside, often in inclement weather, in order to determine if mail is present.

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Previous attempts to provide a device that indicates the presence of mail in the mailbox have been primarily mechanical devices, ranging from flags that pop up when the door of the mailbox is open, to springs with small ribbons on them. These previous attempts rely on the opening of the door of the mailbox as a signal that mail has been placed in the box. However, such an approach does not work if the

door has been inadvertently opened and closed, if the springs or flags have not been reset or at night.

Mail is generally delivered to a box positioned adjacent the home or street of the person receiving the mail. Checking the box for the arrival of the mail can be
5 troublesome for those individuals having a box positioned adjacent the street. This can be particularly troublesome during inclement weather and for those suffering from various disabilities. It would be a benefit, therefore, to have a device that would provide a visual indication that is readily visible from a distance that signaled the arrival of the mail.

10 Furthermore, the use of mailboxes with one or more doors is known in the prior art. More specifically, mailboxes with one or more doors heretofore devised and utilized for the purpose of depositing and retrieving mail from either the front or the back of the mailbox are known to consist basically of familiar, expected, and obvious structural configurations.

15 Accordingly, a need remains for a mailbox that has both an alerting mechanism and allows access from the both ends of the mailbox.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In view of the foregoing background, it is therefore an object of the present
20 invention to provide a mailbox notification system. These and other objects, features, and advantages of the invention are provided by a system attachable to a mailbox for notifying a user when mail has arrived and includes a housing having a longitudinal axis and a substantially planar bottom surface extending parallel thereto. Such a housing is securable to a support stand and has oppositely spaced
25 open end portions for receiving and dispensing mail therethrough. The housing further includes a plurality of latches disposed adjacent the end portions.

The preferred embodiment includes a plurality of doors connected to the housing and adjacent the end portions thereof. Such a plurality of doors have a plurality of upper lip portions extending substantially parallel to the axis that are
30 slidably engageable between the housing and the plurality of latches respectively

so that the plurality of doors can be maintained at a substantially stable closed position. One of the doors is disposed at a proximal end portion of the housing and another door is disposed at a distal end portion of the housing.

Advantageously, the present invention further includes a mechanism for
5 identifying when mail has been placed within the housing. Such an identifying mechanism is preferably disposed partially within and partially outside select portions of the housing and adjacent one of the doors. The identifying mechanism further includes a detector having a sensor with a line of sight directed towards the distal end portion of the housing.

10 Of course, various sensors may be employed such as motion sensors, optical sensors and infrared sensors, for example, as well known to a person of ordinary skill in the art. The identifying mechanism further includes a light assembly including a plurality of LEDs corresponding to a plurality of different modes. The light assembly is secured to the housing substantially medially of the plurality of
15 doors, wherein the detector generates and sends a signal to the light assembly for activating one of the LEDs.

The present invention further includes a remote mechanism for transmitting a signal to a user when the identifying mechanism is activated. Advantageously, the remote mechanism is operably connected to the identifying mechanism. Such a
20 remote mechanism includes a mobile transceiver that is hand-operable by an operator and a stationary transceiver that is preferably disposed within the housing and operably coupled to the detector and the light assembly.

The stationary transceiver generates and sends a signal to the mobile transceiver for identifying a current mode of the system. The mobile transceiver
25 also generates and sends a responding signal to the stationary transceiver for deactivating the current mode as desired by a user. A plurality of power supply sources are electrically coupled to the identifying and remote mechanisms respectively.

In an alternate embodiment, one of the plurality of doors can be adapted for
30 becoming stationary and another of the plurality can be pivoted between open and

closed positions. Furthermore, the identifying mechanism and the remote mechanism are secured to the stationary door. Advantageously, the alternate embodiment further includes a bracket and fastening members having hollow shaft portions provided with opposed end portions secured to the bracket and passing inwardly through one of the doors door, respectively. One of the end portions of the fastening member terminates within the housing for directing a plurality of wires therein from an exterior of the housing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

The novel features believed to be characteristic of this invention are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. The invention itself, however, both as to its organization and method of operation, together with further objects and advantages thereof, may best be understood by reference to the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view showing a dual access mailbox including a mailbox notification system, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of FIG. 1 taken along line 2-2;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view showing an alternate embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the system shown in FIG. 3 taken along line 4-4;

FIG. 5 is an enlarged perspective view of the remote mechanism; and

FIG. 6 is a partial cross-sectional view showing the arrangement of the identifying and remote mechanisms.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein.

Rather, these embodiments are provided so that this application will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the true scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout the figures. Prime and double prime notations refer to alternate embodiments of like elements.

5 The system of this invention is referred to generally in FIGS. 1-6 by the reference numeral 10 and is intended to provide a dual access mailbox with a wireless mechanism for alerting residence when the mail has been delivered. It should be understood that the system 10 may be employed to retrieve mail in a variety of locations including commercial business locations and a private
10 residence.

 Referring initially to FIG. 1, the system 10 includes a housing 20 having a longitudinal axis and a substantially planar bottom surface extending parallel thereto. Such a housing 20 is securable to a support stand 21 and has oppositely spaced open end portions for receiving and dispensing mail therethrough. The
15 housing 20 further includes a plurality of latches 22 disposed adjacent the end portions.

 The preferred embodiment 10 includes a plurality of doors 23 connected to the housing 20 and adjacent the end portions thereof. Such a plurality of doors 23 have a plurality of upper lip portions extending substantially parallel to the axis that
20 are slidably engageable between the housing 20 and the plurality of latches 22 respectively so that the plurality of doors 23 can be maintained at a substantially stable closed position. One of the doors 23a is disposed at a proximal end portion of the housing 20 and another door 23b is disposed at a distal end portion of the housing 20.

25 Referring to FIG. 2, the present invention advantageously includes a mechanism for identifying when mail has been placed within the housing 20. Such an identifying mechanism 30 is preferably disposed partially within and partially outside select portions of the housing 20 and adjacent one of the doors 23. The identifying mechanism 30 further includes a detector 31 having a sensor 32 with a
30 line of sight directed towards the distal end portion of the housing 20. Of course,

various sensors 32 may be employed such as motion sensors, optical sensors and infrared sensors, for example, as well known to a person of ordinary skill in the art.

The identifying mechanism 30 further includes a light assembly 40 including a plurality of LEDs 41 corresponding to a plurality of different modes. The light
5 assembly 40 is secured to the housing 20 substantially medially of the plurality of doors 23, wherein the detector 31 generates and sends a signal to the light assembly 40 for activating one of the LEDs 41.

Referring to FIGS. 2 and 5, the present invention further includes a remote mechanism 50 for transmitting a signal to a user when the identifying mechanism
10 30 is activated. Advantageously, the remote mechanism 50 is operably connected to the identifying mechanism 30 for communicating therewith. Such a remote mechanism 50 includes a mobile transceiver 51 that is hand-operable by an operator and a stationary transceiver 52 that is preferably disposed within the housing 20 and operably coupled to the detector 31 and the light assembly 40.

15 The stationary transceiver 52 generates and sends a signal to the mobile transceiver 51 for identifying a current mode of the system 10. The mobile transceiver 51 also generates and sends a responding signal to the stationary transceiver 52 for deactivating the current mode, as desired by a user. A plurality of power supply sources 53 are electrically coupled to the identifying 30 and remote
20 mechanisms 50 respectively.

Referring to FIGS. 3 and 4, an alternate embodiment 10' includes two light assemblies 40'. Each light assembly 40' notifies a different person via the remote mechanism 50 when their mail has arrived.

Referring to FIG. 6, in yet another alternate embodiment 10", one of the
25 plurality of doors 23a can be adapted for becoming stationary and another of the plurality (not shown) can be pivoted between open and closed positions. Furthermore, the identifying mechanism 30" and the remote mechanism 50" are secured to the stationary door 23a.

Advantageously, embodiment 10" further includes a bracket 24 and
30 fastening members 25 having hollow shaft portions provided with opposed end

portions secured to the bracket 24 and passing inwardly through one of the doors 23a, respectively. One of the end portions of the fastening member 25 terminates within the housing 20" for directing a plurality of wires 26 therein from an exterior of the housing 20".

5 The present invention allows a user to check their mail in a variety of ways. If the mailbox is located on a busy road that makes going to get the mail risky, the present invention allows a user to retrieve the mail safely from the end opposite the road. Many houses are located some distance from the mailbox and retrieving the mail may involve a lengthy walk or even a short drive. Making several trips a day to
10 a mailbox that far away is frustrating. The wireless alert mechanism allows residents to check for the mail without ever leaving the house. This is also helpful for those who are handicapped and/or elderly.

 While the invention has been described with respect to a certain specific embodiment, it will be appreciated that many modifications and changes may be
15 made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. It is intended, therefore, by the appended claims to cover all such modifications and changes as fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

 In particular, with respect to the above description, it is to be realized that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the present invention may
20 include variations in size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation. The assembly and use of the present invention are deemed readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art.